



Amphibians



Red-backed salamander



Green frog



The Eastern Newt, in its terrestrial subadult stage, has brightly colored skin to ward off predators.

The word “amphibian” comes from the Greek “amphibios,” meaning “both lives.” Most adult amphibians are better adapted to life on land, while their larval phases are entirely aquatic. For much of their lives, which may last several years or a couple of months, depending on species, larval amphibians (e.g., tadpoles) bear little resemblance to their adult forms. However, in a matter of weeks or days, the fish-like larvae transform into terrestrial, air-breathing, four-legged vertebrates. Adult terrestrial amphibians can breathe either through their skin or with lungs. The families include frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts.

Shenandoah National Park is home to 10 species of toads and frogs and 14 species of salamanders or newts. The Shenandoah Salamander is the only federally endangered animal species found in the park. It is endemic to high elevation talus slopes located in three scattered areas of the central section of the park. This salamander is closely related to the red-backed salamander.

The long-term health of worldwide and park amphibian populations is in question. Acid deposition, heavy metal deposition (mercury), and forest defoliation due to exotic insect pests may adversely impact amphibian populations.